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"BATMAN RETURNS"

Val Kilmer cops
the cowl from
Michael Keaton

BATMAN FOREVER

Volume 3 Number 1

BATMAN

FOREVER

New director, new sidekick, new stars—it's a holy new Bat-game.

by Steve Biodrowski

Much as I hate to take human life, I'm afraid this time it's necessary," says Batman in "Dr. Hugo Strange and the Mutant Monsters" (*Batman* #1, 1940). The caped crusader then proceeds, from the relative safety of the Batplane, to machine gun some human thugs and lasso a humanoid monster by the neck, hoisting him in the air and strangling him to death. "He's probably better off this way," is the only sympathy the Dark Knight expresses for this unfortunate victim of Dr. Strange's experiments. There is no thought of returning him to the asylum from which he was kidnapped; death is his only cure—and Batman is only too willing to administer it.

So it was with at least a hint of amusement that one noted an *L.A. Weekly* reviewer's objection (on the grounds of being a "comic book purist") to Batman's actually killing villains in BATMAN RETURNS. It was with even greater amusement that one reacted when, in BATMAN: MASK OF THE PHANTASM, the animated feature widely regarded as more faithful to the comic book, Commissioner Gordon insists, "The Batman doesn't kill." And one could be rolling in the aisles by the time Lee & Janet Scott Batchler's script for BATMAN III had Bruce Wayne insisting to Dick Grayson, "NO KILLING! We're not the jury, *or* the executioner."

Fortunately, that last little exchange doesn't survive in Akiva Goldsman's revised drafts for BATMAN FOREVER. However, there is no doubt that we will be seeing a lighter version of the Dark Knight, as Warner Bros appeases not only the family audience but, more importantly, their merchandising partners, who don't necessarily want their products associated with characters who crack whips and spew bile.

The kinder, gentler BATMAN FOREVER opens June 16. Tim Burton and Peter MacGregor-Scott produced, with Benjamin Melniker and Michael E. Uslan serving as executive producers. Joel Schumacher directed a new ensemble cast made up of Val Kilmer as Bruce Wayne/Batman, Tommy Lee Jones as Harvey Dent/Two-Face, Jim Carrey as Edward Nygma/The Riddler, Chris O'Donnell as Dick Grayson/Robin the Boy Wonder, and Nicole Kidman as Dr. Chase Meridian. Returning are Michael Gough as Alfred and Pat Hingle as Commissioner Gordon. Bob Ringwood again designed the costumes, and the special effects were supervised by Academy Award-winner John Dykstra (STAR WARS).

So, is this Batman going to be a do-goody liberal who always captures his man alive?

The film features several dual personalities, not only Batman & Robin but two schizo villains, the Riddler & Two-Face (Jim Carrey and Tommy Lee Jones).

Val Kilmer is the new Dark Knight, in a sleeker Batsuit. The dual nature of the character is explored by having Bruce Wayne involved with a psychologist (Nicole Kidman, inset right) who specializes in split personalities. Inset left: Dick Grayson (Chris O'Donnell) uses the "Flying Graysons" circus outfit of his murdered family for his Robin costume—until Batman observes sarcastically, "Nice camouflage in a paint factory."

Robin's new costume resembles the Batsuit. "Why should he be in screaming red and yellow next to a guy who's camouflaged in black?" asks Schumacher.

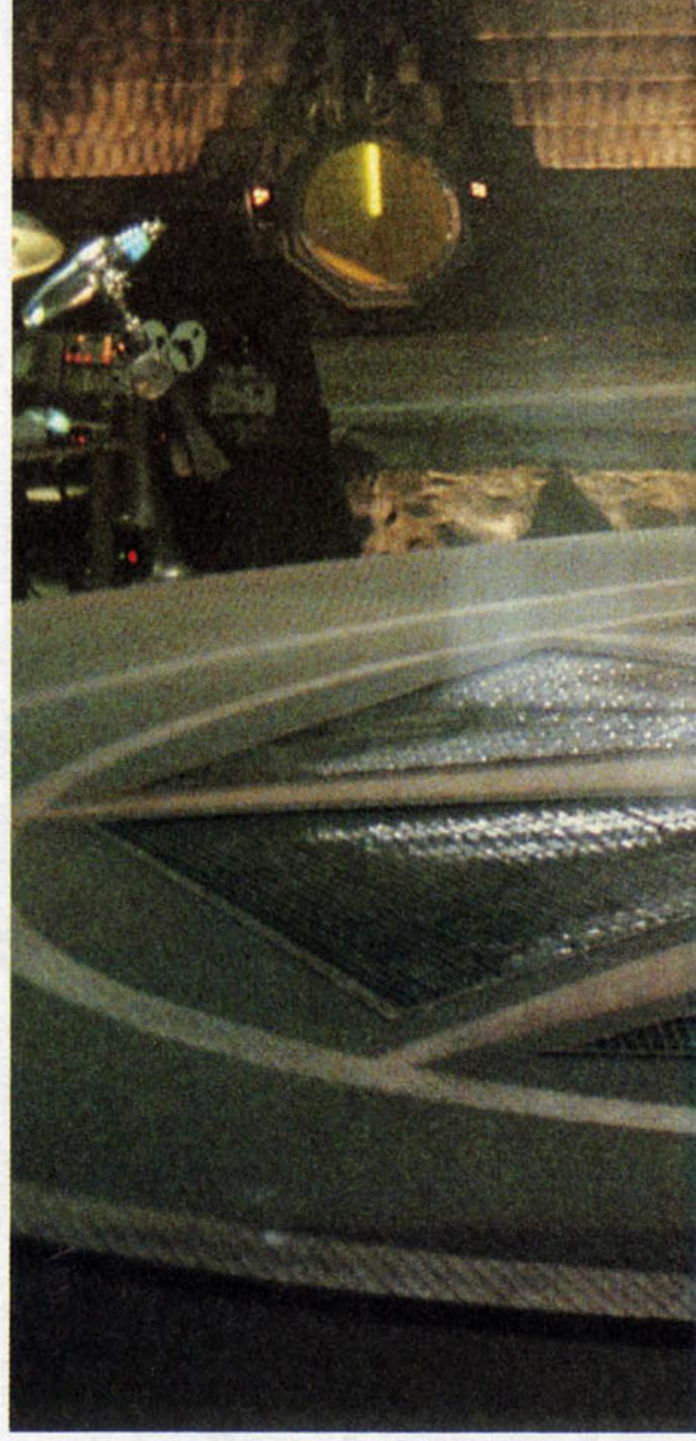
According to Joel Schumacher, when villains "try to kill Batman, he does sometimes get out of their way so that they can kill themselves. You won't see him actively murder anyone in this. I don't think it's necessary. I also know that a lot of young people are fans of Batman, and I think that, along with the fun and games, there has to be a little bit of responsibility."

Writer Akiva Goldsman adds, "We have this ongoing debate: Does Batman ever kill anybody in this movie? No. But I didn't look at the other two films in terms of whether or not he actually kills people. Conventional wisdom said he didn't, that he just lets people die. That's subject to interpretation, whether some bad guys end up dead at their own hands. But Batman doesn't come and snap any necks."

This may sound like splitting hairs, but it's symptomatic of the problems encountered when attempting to adapt a character with a long history. "People have fidelity to different versions of Batman," Goldsman opines. "There have been [versions] who make it a rule not to kill, and there have been [versions] who are thoroughly dark vigilantes. And everybody thinks that their Batman is the real Batman. There are people who think the true Batman is the one on TV. That happens not to be the Batman I think of as the real Batman, although the show was fun. I guess the true Batman is Bob Kane's, but that Batman is different from the one of today. Batman came into his own again with Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and then again when Tim Burton made BATMAN. I think the Batman of the first two movies is as defining an incarnation as any that came before. That's what's always interesting about working with a popular myth: everybody has pride of ownership. You want to be respective of that, but also give them something that they don't quite expect."

The idea that Batman has gone through different incarnations was the jumping off point for Schumacher to take the character in a new direction. "The great thing about Batman is that since 1939 there have been so many interpretations of the theme—everything from Dracula to cyborgs to fantasy," says the director. "I approached it that way: the artists and storytellers always pay homage to the past but create their own comic book. That's what I tried to do."

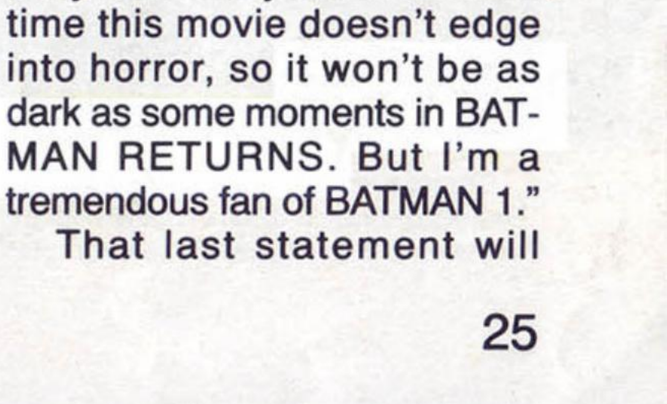
Adds Goldman, "Joel really had some clear ideas about how to let Batman live again and differently. Our attempt is to revisit the myth in a way that is again different and yet familiar. In that sense, you want to look at what makes Batman behave the way he behaves. I think we were pretty strenuous in terms of trying to understand and re-examine the motivations for putting on that cape and cowl."



Two-Face's double personality reveals itself in every aspect of his life, including girlfriends Leather (Debi Mazar) and Lace (Drew Barrymore).

Schumacher's effort at re-inventing the character was aided by recasting the lead role. "I thought I was making the movie with Michael Keaton for quite a long time," he recounts. "He had a lot of unresolved issues about the last two movies, which had nothing to do with me. So, I did not know I was going to have a new Bruce Wayne/Batman, but when I saw TOMBSTONE, I did fantasize about Val being in the role, though I didn't think that was a possibility. Then a few months after that, Bob Da-

The Batcave (above) goes up in flames (right) after the Riddler manages to discover its whereabouts.



ley of Warners asked if I'd ever considered anybody else besides Michael. So I called Val's agent, and Val was in Africa, doing research on a script he was writing about a man who spent time with primitive tribes in Africa. It took three days, and—believe it or not—when they finally found him, he was in a bat cave. Val and I had met on previous movies; and, without seeing a script, without talking to me, he said yes."

Schumacher felt "totally" liberated from the previous films by the new casting. "Then we were in a new comic book," he explains. "Of course, when you have a 34-year-old Batman/Bruce Wayne with Val, it's a different story."

Ironically, the new Batman, like Michael Keaton in NIGHT SHIFT, had first gained attention in a comedy, TOP SECRET. Schumacher is fond of pointing out that the term for the film's source material (at least before "graphic novel" came in vogue) is "comic book," not "tragic book," which he offers as a justification for exploiting the comedic abilities of his star. "Val has a great sense of humor," he points out. "We've tried to introduce it into his Bruce Wayne and his Batman, but one of the reasons I chose Val is because he is very deep and introspective and intense, and I think you have to believe that. Even though he has a sense of humor, there's always an edge underneath. He's not Rodney Dangerfield!"

Is the humor, then, not an attempt to completely lighten up the Dark Knight? "I hope not! I think the Dark Knight is aptly named and will always be a dark character," says Goldsman. However, he adds, "Sometimes very serious situations are also very funny. The thing about Gotham City that always has to be remembered is that everybody is really, *really* smart. It's a world where, if you have a psychological dysfunction, you create phenomenal machinery in order to work through your difficulty: rather than go to therapy, you build a batmobile and a suit that gives you virtually superhuman powers, and you have a lifelong catharsis. Very smart people I think are also very witty. So this movie has a lot of wit, but the issues themselves we take very seriously. At the same time this movie doesn't edge into horror, so it won't be as dark as some moments in BATMAN RETURNS. But I'm a tremendous fan of BATMAN 1."

That last statement will

hardly reassure those who found BATMAN an uncharacteristically impersonal film from one of Cinemagination's most idiosyncratic talents. Fans can at least rest easy knowing that BATMAN FOREVER is not an attempt to turn the Caped Crusader into a squeaky clean superhero. "Janet Kahn, who runs DC Comics, says the world's divided between Superman fans and Batman fans," notes Schumacher. "Of course, that was very true of me, because as a child I was never a Superman fan; I was always a Batman fan. When you are a Batman fan, there's a very haunting part to it, because he is a real man, as opposed to a superhero. His parents were shot in front of him, and he has lived alone, with his trusty butler, and does don this batsuit and wreak vengeance and vigilantism on Gotham City. It's only appropriate that at a certain point someone might turn around and say, 'Why did I become Batman? What is it that I'm doing exactly? And am I doing this because I want to or because I have no choice?' I think that makes an interesting Batman story."

According to Schumacher, Warners Bros. was not specific about what direction they wanted that story to take when they offered him the franchise. "I wanted to bring in some of the mythic elements of why he became Batman, and I wanted to do a story about dual personalities," he says. "Besides Bruce Wayne having two identities, so do the villains. Two-Face is a good example, and the Riddler is also Edward Nygma, a nerdy inventor." On the basis of a script called SMOKE AND MIRRORS, Schumacher recommended the writing team of Lee Batchler and Janet Scott Batchler to Burton. "We met with them and talked for about an hour," recalls Schumacher. "A week later, Janet and Lee pitched the story. They were under contract to do another film, and they snuck away to do this draft for us. Then they had to go

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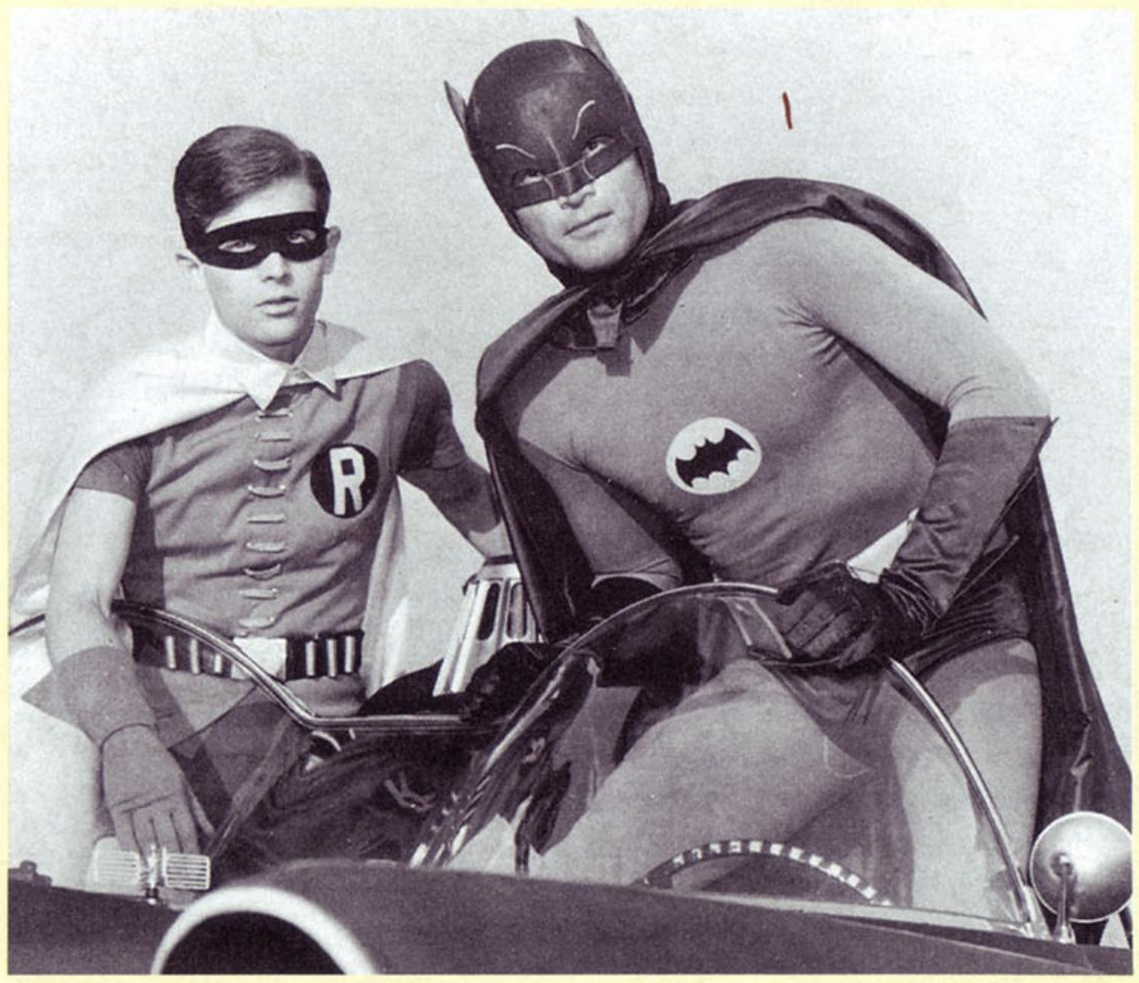
Comic book primary colors predominate the new film's look, as when the Batmobile races down Wall Street (above, standing in for Gotham) or Batman crashes a party (right), one example of the new Bat's improved gracefulness.

BATMAN
FOREVER THE DARK KNIGHT

A look at the sinister superhero's unending appeal.

By Joe Desris



Batman has appeared in many forms. Until the Warner Bros films, the most popular version with mainstream audiences was the campy TV desecration.

With Batman's worldwide popularity today, it may be difficult to believe there was a time when he had a low profile, but the Dark Knight took about 25 years to reach icon status. This is not to say that Batman did not get off to a good start. After only eight appearances, he became the mainstay on covers of *Detective Comics*, then earned his own title in 1940, had his own newspaper strip in 1943, and surfaced on movie screens with two 15-chapter serials, in 1943 and 1949.

A major portion of Batman's appeal stems from the fact that he is a regular guy. Maybe an unusually well-disciplined regular guy, he nevertheless remains earth-bound like the rest of us, even if he is a millionaire socialite. Batman is not interplanetary, nor does he possess traditional superpowers, yet vast knowledge, resources, and finely tuned skills make him a highly determined and virtually unconquerable opponent.

It is generally acknowledged that cartoonist Bob Kane developed the character, although the Dark Knight that first appeared in print ("The Case of the Chemical Syndicate," in *Detective Comics* #27, May 1939) was actually a collaborative effort between Kane and Bill Finger, who wrote Batman's first two adventures and later chronicled some of the most memorable villains, plots, and sets.

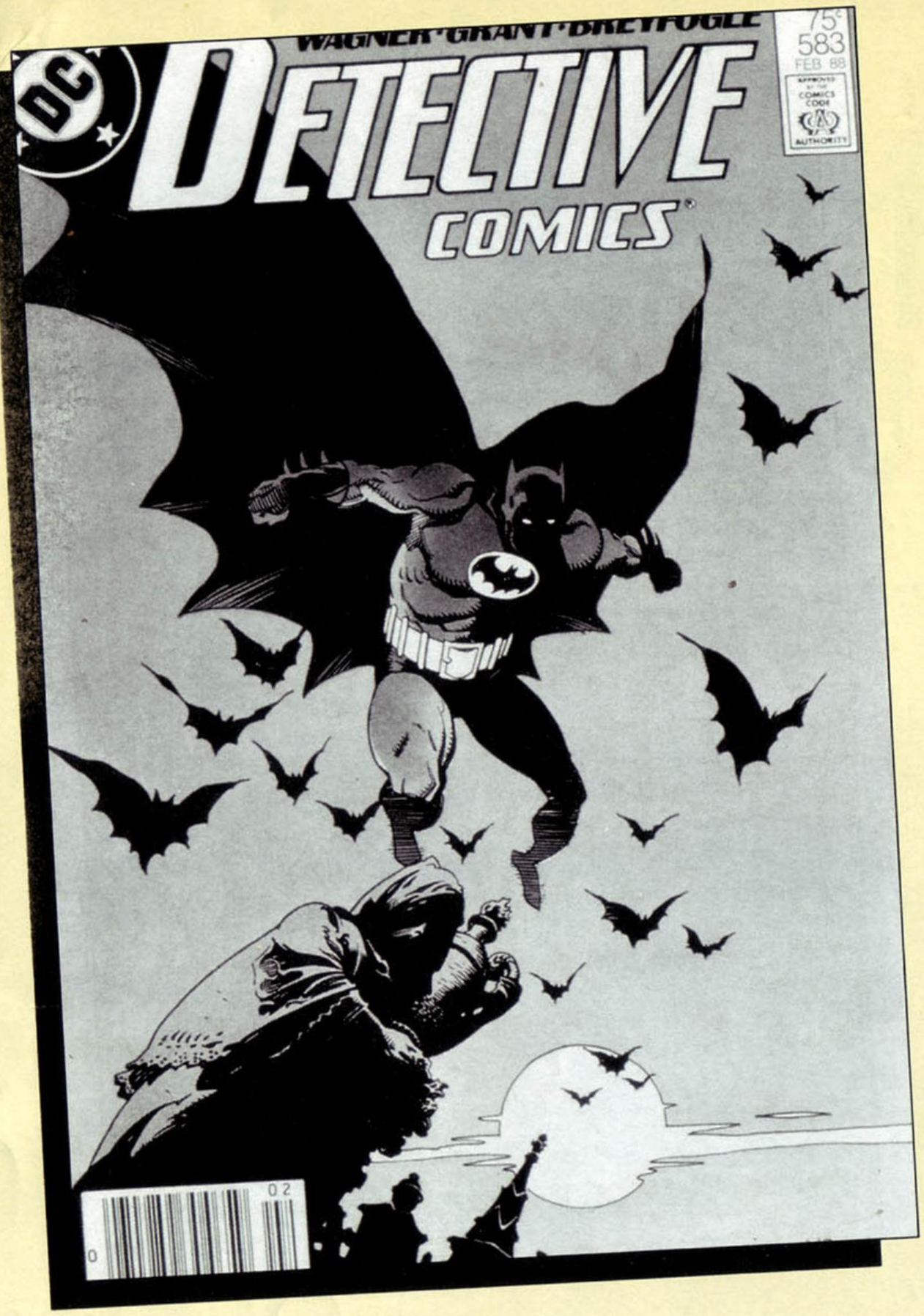
The comic books chronicle the adventures of Bruce Wayne, who as a boy experienced the trauma of seeing his parents murdered on a dark city street. The orphaned Wayne developed his detective skills over a 15-year period, until a bat flew into his study one evening—the omen he needed to adopt his crime-fighting persona. Combining a strong sense of honesty and justice, the Masked Manhunter became an obsessed, relentless, and potentially lethal fighting machine (although later interpretations assumed a personal code against killing). An unequaled tactician and strategist, he is also expert at disguises and a master of nearly all forms of physical combat, with a variety of high-tech equipment and weaponry at his disposal.

Batman fought crime solo for 11 adventures before Robin was introduced. Like Wayne, Dick Grayson suffered the loss of his parents, who were murdered by gangsters. Grayson became Robin the Boy Wonder and, alongside Batman, brought his parents' assailants to justice. Although Bruce Wayne's bachelor status made adoption impossible, Grayson became his legal ward. Significantly, Robin was the comics' first super-hero boy sidekick, soon to be followed by Bucky, Toro, Sandy, and other imitators.

While Bruce Wayne has enjoyed love interests such as Vicki Vale, Batman has had several as well, including Poison Ivy. But none have had the particular qualities of Catwoman. Like the Joker, the Feline Fury appeared in *Batman* #1, although her disguise was much different from her current outfit (she wore a large cat's head, for example). She soon developed other feline imagery that made her one of Batman's most memorable and devious foes. Batman and Catwoman also developed a simultaneous repulsion and attraction for each other, each wishing their opponent would change their ways and join the other.

Although Batman and Robin occasionally battled the Axis during World War II, the Gotham Guardians generally remained crime-fighting detectives. This remained true until the latter half of the 1950s when they embarked upon a curious career, which often included battling aliens and other fanciful adventures. It was common to see Batman during the day, and this quickly became the era of the Dynamic Duo rather than the Dark Knight Detective. Comic and semi-comic characters such as Bat-Mite and Bat-Hound were also introduced; though enjoyable, such stories transported the characters even further from their film noir roots, where

According to creator Bob Kane, the the mystique of Batman's split personality has sustained interest.



Despite the campy TV show, the Dark Knight remained dark in the pages of Detective Comics.

shadowy, nocturnal figures lurked in dim, deserted alleyways of mysterious, rain-slicked Gotham streets .

A six-year period of exponential growth in popularity began in 1963. A change of staff on the comics precipitated a new approach to the character, and a "new look" was introduced in *Detective Comics* #327, part of which included a yellow ellipse behind Batman's chest emblem, a new Batmobile, and a new way to get to the Batcave (an elevator). The "new look" also changed the style of Batman's adventures. Once again, he was a detective operating at night,solving crimes and battling some of his most infamous foes.

Batman was developed for television in 1965, leading to the generally unanticipated overnight nationwide success. The 1966-68 TV series quickly made Batman a pop culture icon as well as an established part of American folklore. As a media sensation, Batman not only was covered by newspapers, magazines, and TV; he also had a feature film, syndicated newspaper strip, and million-dollar merchandising. A plethora of licensed Batman collectibles descended on the public, including model kits, Halloween costumes, bubble gum cards, pencils, lunch boxes, and coloring books.

The camp of the TV show had little effect on the comics. The ubiquitous and ridiculous bat-gizmos, the labeling of practically every knob and spec of dirt in the Batcave, and the comedic dialog remained confined to the tube. The televised satire was not well received by all fans of the Masked Manhunter, and this backlash began to manifest itself late in 1967 when Neal Adams began illustrating his version: a creature of the night. Batman's 1960s comic book adventures were unlike the somber 1970s version or the gritty Dark Knight motif of the 1980s.

Batman first appeared in a Saturday morning animated series for CBS in *The Batman/Superman Hour* on September 14, 1968. In 1969, freshman Dick Grayson left for college, splitting the Batman and Robin partnership...at least until Christmas and summer vacations. As he matured, Grayson decided that not only did he no longer fit the image of a Boy Wonder, but his goals and attitudes had become markedly different from a more obsessed Dark Knight. As Grayson entered Hudson University, the locale of Robin's adventures also changed, and Grayson subsequently became the super-hero Nightwing. Junior high school student Jason Todd then took over the role of Robin in *Detective Comics* #526.

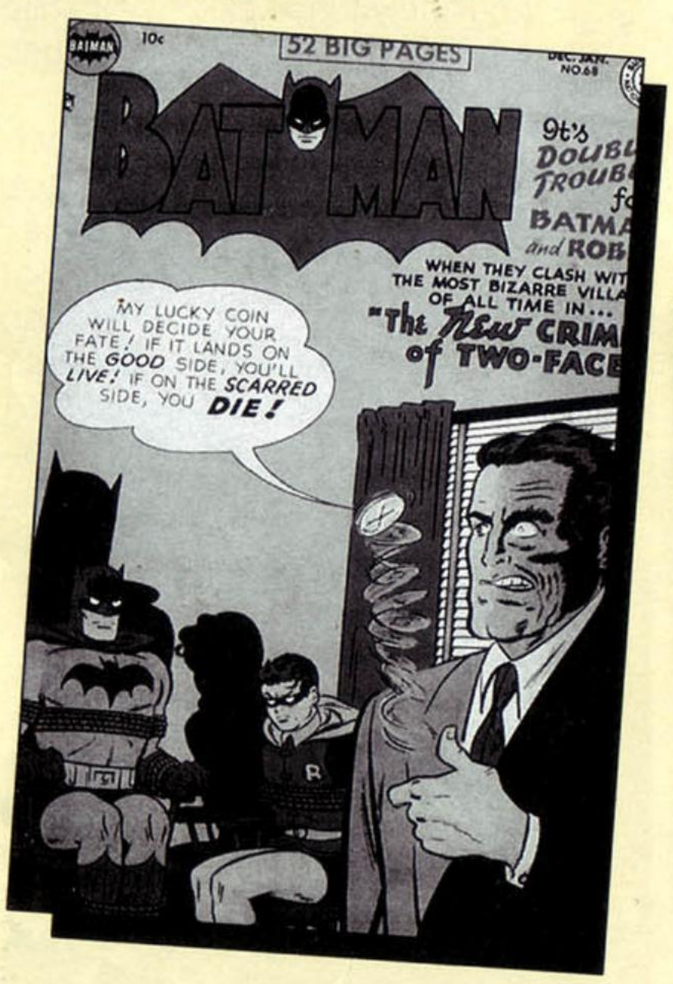
A true turning point for Batman came in 1986, when Frank Miller's acclaimed *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* was published. A critical and commercial success, Miller's four-part graphic novel received unanticipated worldwide press coverage. Set in a depressingly bleak near-future, the series established a fashionably darker tone for Batman that remains in vogue today, in all media. As BATMAN FOREVER scribe Akiva Goldsman explains, *"The Dark Knight Returns* not only reinvented Batman; it reinvented comics. That was the first time to my knowledge that we were given permission to expect psychological realism and pathos in a mainstream comic. Gone were the days of simple all good, all evil. Comic books had to catch up with the realities of living in the world. They had certainly started in the '60s with Neal Adams' *Green Arrow* and *Green Lantern* stuff. But Frank Miller took a character whom everybody knew and redid it in a way that made everybody stop and look."

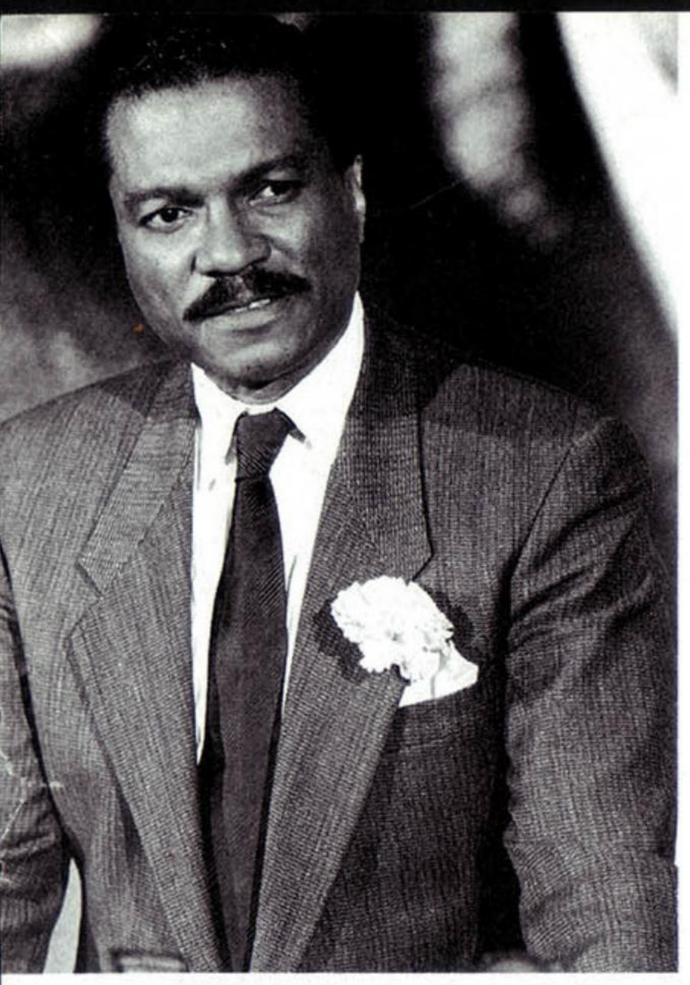
Miller's work was the start of a Batman renaissance, which also includes *Batman: The Animated Series*, a new comic book entitled *Batman Adventures*, and the phenomenally popular films BATMAN (1989) and BATMAN RETURNS (1992). With the current BATMAN FOREVER, the Caped Crusader is once again a master of all media, appearing in theaters, on laser discs, computer games, on-line services, and television, yet still firmly established in his original form, the comic book.

If anyone deserves the final word on the continuing legend of the Dark Knight, it's Bob Kane who watched his Caped Crusader battle a myriad of baddies in hundreds of incarnations for over 50 years. When asked to pinpoint the key to Batman's longevity, Kane says, "Everyone has a good side and a bad side, but people have always been fascinated by the dark side of their human character, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It's a prevailing concept that's been around forever. Not that Batman is a bad guy, but he lives in a world that's dark and mysterious, and it's the mystique of it all—the batcave, his costume, the gimmicks, the villains—that's sustained it for so many decades. Batman is a part of Americana, like Babe Ruth or Mickey Mouse," Kane concludes. "He's like the United States flag: he'll always be here, and I don't think he'll ever die, frankly." □

Bob Kane interview by Taylor White. Akiva Goldsman interview by Steve Biodrowski.

Below: the comics' version of Two-Face, seen characteristically using his coin to decide his victims' fate.





Billy Dee Williams as District Attorney Harvey Dent in BATMAN.

back to their obligation, so they could not continue on the project. I hired Akiva Goldsman, who had worked on THE CLIENT with me, adapting John Grisham's book. Akiva worked with the actors and has done a lot of the rewrites, but Janet and Lee's initial story structure never changed."

Although part of his job was tailoring dialogue for the actors, Goldsman doesn't consider the transition from Keaton to Kilmer a major impetus for character revision. "Certainly in the later stages, one is always attentive to the actor playing the part," explains the writer. "But the idea for this Batman was the same: the notion of revisiting the past in a new way existed when it was Michael and carried over to when it was Val."

Revisiting the past takes the form of flashbacks to a young Bruce Wayne stumbling upon the batcave beneath Wayne manner—an important part of the inspiration that caused him to choose his strange identity when he turned vigilante. It is perhaps symptomatic of Tim Burton's disinterest in the title character that, after two films, we know why the Joker is the Joker, why the Penguin is a Penguin, and why Catwoman is a cat, while we still have no idea why Batman is a bat. "The comic books are very revisionist in an interesting way," says Goldsman of the tendency to replay this seminal incident. The film's revision of origin story "tries to take a lot of the more interesting psychological

NEW FACE FOR TWO-FACE

"I didn't consider Billy Dee Williams, because I see him as a hero, like Clark Gable. I had just worked with Tommy Lee Jones on THE CLIENT and thought he would be great."

elements that might make up a young boy who witnesses the death of his parents and expresses them in a way that's hyperbolic in the way the comic books are hyperbolic.

"Comics now really do speak to actual feelings, but they do so in a way different from straight drama," Goldsman continues. "The added element lets you move off the head-on facing of something tragic. There are some tragic things in this movie, such as the story of Robin—this is a boy who loses his parents. If you were to play that in a straight drama, it would be devastating; it would have to be the whole movie. Because we're in a more hyperbolic world where time and experience seem to have slightly different effects on people, you can have a tremendous weight to it and then expect some kind of resolution—not total healing but some kind of character resolution—in a way that you couldn't in a straight drama."

As a way of focusing on the dilemma of Bruce Wayne's personality conflict, the film introduces a new love interest in the form of Dr. Chase Meridian (Nicole Kidman), a criminal psychologist specializing in dual personality disorders. "It's my comic book and my Gotham City, so that's what criminal psychologists look like!" laughs Schumacher. "If you needed a criminal psychologist, you'd rather have Nicole Kidman than Dr. Ruth any day."

The character, who is attracted more to the Dark Knight than the millionaire socialite, provided a "basis to play with Bruce Wayne struggling with his two identities," according to Schumacher. But an even more important element was the introduction of Dick Grayson. "Here's a young man who's lost his family and wants vengeance," the director points out, "which is an exact mirror of Bruce Wayne—who, like most of us, wants better things for younger people than he has himself. We don't always wish the struggle and pain on others that we chose to have in our own lives. Even though there are many facets to the film, that's its core."

As in the previous films, the crowded scenario focuses on the origin of a new villain, in this case Wayne Enterprises employee Edward Nygma, whose brain-enhancing invention turns him into The Riddler. With the introduction of a new

For the third BATMAN film, Warner Bros selected director Joel Schumacher to replace Tim Burton as custodian of the "corporation's largest asset."

Tommy Lee Jones as the criminal Two-Face in BATMAN FOREVER.

love interest and Robin, there was little room for the transformation of District Attorney Harvey Dent into the criminal Two-Face, now seen only briefly as a television news clip recounting events that took place before the film's beginning. "We're doing the origin of Batman; we're doing the origin of Dick Grayson; we're doing the origin of the Riddler. It's enough!" says Schumacher. "We explain the origin of Harvey/Two-Face, but one of the interesting things about *Batman* comics is that the villains get sent to Arkham Asylum, then break out and make trouble again. So the movie starts with Two-Face escaping after being put in Arkham Asylum for two years by Batman, who was one of his best friends."

Of course, one of the criticisms of BATMAN RETURNS was that having two villains left scant screen time for the Caped Crusader. "It had become tradition in BATMAN films to service a wide variety of characters," Goldsman observes. "In order to service a bunch of characters you have to make decisions about what you see versus what you hear. It seemed more interesting to see the Riddler's story, which drives the actual plot, because he is an unknown identity. There is no secret to Two-Face's identity; everyone knows he was a prosecuting attorney who holds Batman culpable for the incident that scarred him. In order to perpetuate the mystery we had to do the Riddler, so the audience

would know who he was but Batman wouldn't."

The irony of not dramatizing Harvey Dent's transformation into Two-Face is that the last time we saw the character, he was black! Schumacher opted not to use Billy Dee Williams, who had played the character in BATMAN. "I always wanted Tommy Lee Jones," explains the director. "I didn't consider Billy Dee Williams for the role, because I think that Billy Dee Williams is a hero. I always see him like Clark Gable. I had just finished working with Tommy Lee Jones on THE CLIENT, and I thought he would be a great Harvey/Two-Face."

For all the script's attempts at reinventing the series, the filmmakers have, apparently without realizing it, remade the second film. Not only does Batman face a pair of villains; he meets a character (Catwoman previously, Robin this time) who seems to be a replica of himself—a person who has undergone a trauma and tried to carry out a plan of vengeance by taking on a masked persona. Even the romance with Dr. Meridian consciously echoes Selina Kyle/ Catwoman ("Do I need skin-tight leather and a whip?" purrs Nicole Kidman to Batman in the coming attractions trailer). At least, the script manages to justify the awkward title: after undergoing a crisis of doubt over whether or not he should continue with his divided selves, Wayne and Batman supposedly merge into a more unified personality, and the character becomes reconciled to remaining Batman for the rest of his life.

DARK KNIGHT PSYCHOLOGY

"Dr. Meridian is a criminologist who studies dual personalities. But it's my comic book, so she can look like Nicole Kidman—you'd rather have her than Dr. Ruth any day!"

In a bizarre love triangle, Wayne finds himself competing with his own alter ego, whose mystique turns out to be more appealing to Dr. Meridian.

Whether or not we get a completely new Batman, we will see a completely new Batsuit, one which allows the Caped Crusader the agility sorely lacking in the previous films. "I think we were the benefactors of all the pioneering work done on the previous two films," Schumacher maintains. Costume designer "Bob Ringwood, who did the first two films, engineered those suits, and we got the benefit of all of that trial-and-error research. However awkward those suits were, they were the state-of-the-art at that time. If we had been starting from scratch, we would have been stuck with the same problem."

Improving the suit was part of the director's game plan of improving the action elements, the area that most revealed Tim Burton's and Michael Keaton's shortcomings. "The first thing I really wanted to do was streamline the suit," he explains. "I wanted the Batsuit to be very flexible and much closer to the body, giving Val and whatever stuntmen had to wear it a lot of agility. Val really worked hard on his body and martial arts. In fact, the first martial arts sequence you see in the movie, a bank job that Harvey/Two-Face is trying to pull off, Val did almost if not all of everything you're seeing, the kicks and everything—in the suit and the cape, which weighs 40 or 50 pounds. The suit is much different. It's much more body conscious, and also Val has a great body—he's tall and well built, and it looks very beautiful on him.

"What you're always left with in all those great comic book drawings is how much you're *with* Batman," Schumacher continues. "You go up 30 stories with him; you go down 30 stories with him; he lands a certain way, right into frame. I tried to give the audience that sense of jumping off a 30-story building with him, crashing through ceilings, leaping tall buildings with the help of his batarang. We've tried to take you there with the camera. We had to have a very flexible suit to do that."

Another big costuming improvement is the outfit for Robin. As portrayed in this movie, the traditional, brightly colored garb is a vestige from the character's stint as one of the Flying Graysons' circus act. "Well, I had to do something to justify that stupid costume!" laughs Schumacher. "Why should this guy be in screaming red and yellow next to a guy who's camouflaged in black? I'm a modest man, but our biggest triumph is redesigning the Robin suit—the credit belongs to Bob Ringwood. We kept the colors, but we darkened them. I took the liberty of assuming that Alfred made the Batsuit, so why shouldn't he help Robin make a great suit? Also, not only do I not like the Robin suit aesthetically, but it makes no sense. It has no protection, whereas the Batsuit is a form of armor. So we did the Robin suit as a version of that, which would help with self-defense."

BATMAN FOREVER also represents the first time that the series has gotten out of the studio and onto location, in this case the streets of New York City. "I think that one of the problems when you build a city on a sound stage or a back lot is that there's a very short run for the Batmobile," explains Schumacher. "As big as a sound stage is, the minute you rev up a car, it will be at the other end in one second. The

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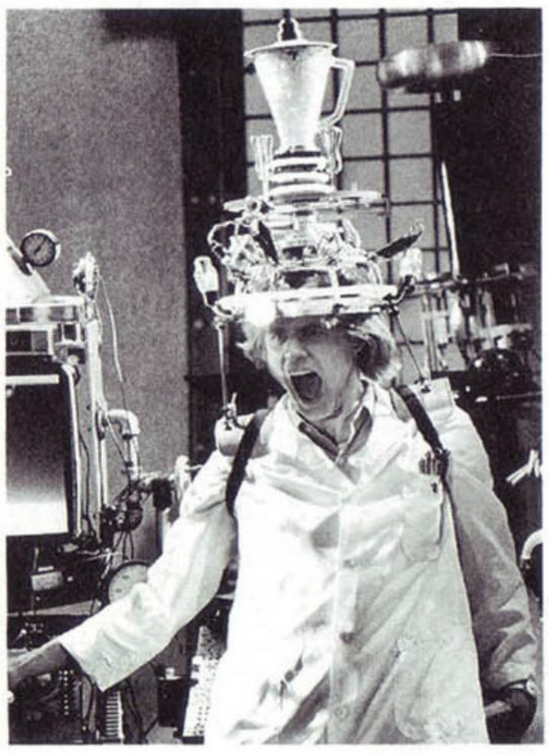

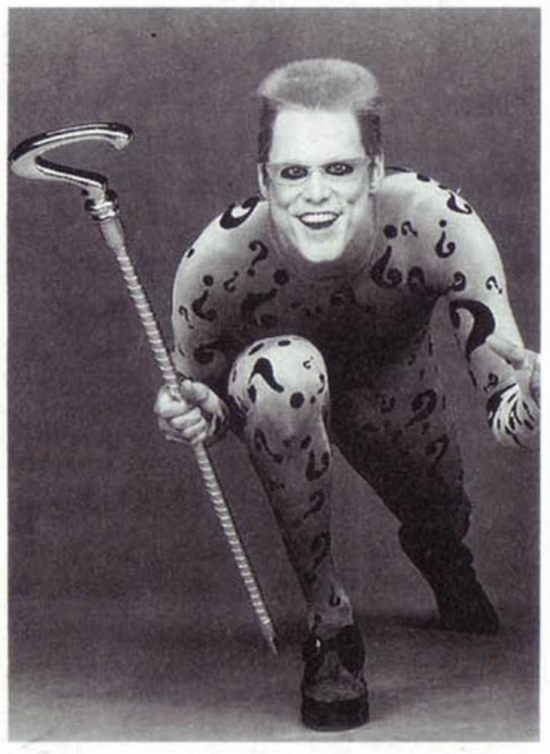

The two faces of Jim Carrey: geeky scientist Edward Nygma (left) and Batman nemesis the Riddler (right). Says Schumacher, "Jim's body had to be perfect to wear that leotard; he had to work out mercilessly, and he couldn't eat a thing."

BATMAN FOREVER

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new Batmobile can go over 100 mph, and it has a flame 25 feet long. I wanted the audience to really see that. By using real streets, we were able to have much longer and faster runs with the cars. There's a really fun sequence with the Batmobile and this incredible Dodge armored car from 1941. So one of the first things we shot was Wall Street. [Director of photography] Stephen Goldblatt lit it pistachio green, raspberry red, and lemon yellow—all these incredible comic book colors, with all this smoke and steam. Then to send the new Batmobile at 100 m.p.h. down Wall Street with a 25-foot flame—it was exciting!"

Schumacher estimates that when the film is released on June 6, it will have been exactly two years since he was offered the "the corporation's largest asset," as the Warners execs put it. "I said I couldn't even think about it unless Tim [Burton] wanted me to do it," Schumacher recalls, "because Tim and I have been friends since he hired a lot of special effects people from LOST BOYS to do BEETLEJUICE. I went to see him, and he *really* wanted me to do it—because *he* didn't want to do it! So I decided to do it, thinking to myself as I left, 'Gee, is *anybody* interested in the third BATMAN film?' Then the deluge of gossip, rumors, and attention started, so the good news is people *are* interested. I'm very happy for that, because we worked very hard to make something people will enjoy seeing this summer." □

BATMAN FOREVER

INTRODUCING ROBIN

Chris O'Donnell is the new Boy Wonder.

After abandoned attempts in BATMAN and BATMAN RETURNS, Dick Grayson finally makes his entrance in BATMAN FOREVER, in the form of actor Chris O'-Donnell (SCENT OF A WOMAN). That may hardly be cause for rejoicing among those who remember the character as a colorful but extraneous sidekick; however, the filmmakers intend to turn Robin into something more than just a Boy Wonder. "This is no 'Holy Cheesecake' Robin," director Joel Schumacher insists. "He's young and angry, and he has a story of his own."

"I grew up watching the TV show, and Charlie in SCENT OF A WOMAN was actually more like the Burt Ward character!" laughs O'-Donnell. "Joel had this vision of Robin as a circus gypsy, someone who's grown up and been toughened on the road. He undergoes a traumatic experience—his parents die—but when he meets Bruce Wayne, this is the kind of person he resents.

"Joel was very specific about the look: leather jacket, and cut-off sleeves—he wanted him to be kind of sexy," O'Donnell adds, referring to Robin's new "Europunk" appearance, which includes an earring that baffled Batman-creator Bob Kane. "Apparently, he said that he didn't understand it. Don't worry—it's on the left ear!"

Akiva Goldsman elaborates on the approach to the characterization: "One of the very early ideas that Joel had, when we were working on CLIENT, was that he never wanted a 12-year-old wide-eyed acolyte, whom Batman willingly accepts. He wanted a tough kid who was a more accurate representation of somebody who lives in a circus and who was psychologically and emotionally an island. We came up with the notion that, if Robin is an echo of Batman's past, then Batman is not going to say, 'Come on board.' In fact, there's nothing worse than seeing what happened to him happen to someone else, and the last thing he would want is for this kid to live a life as ridden with danger and obsession as his. So what you have then is a lovely conflict, which you always want at the beginning of great relationships."

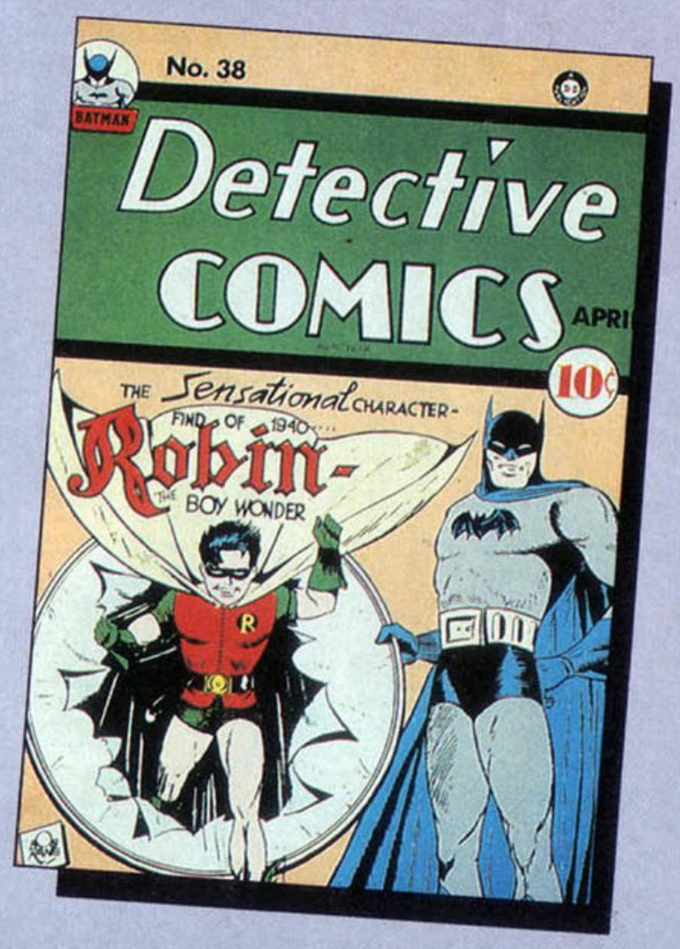
That relationship was altered somewhat by the recasting of Batman. O'Donnell recalls, "Val really changed the dynamics. It became more a big brother-little brother relationship. Originally, it was written a little bit younger, and with Michael Keaton it would have been more a father-son type of thing."

The film offered an opportunity to share the screen with not only Kilmer but also Jim Carrey and Tommy Lee Jones, but the acting demands were more Bruce Lee than Lee Strasberg. In fact, O'Donnell had to take martial arts training in order to pull off numerous physical encounters, including a fight with world champion Don "the Dragon" Wilson. "I am by no means an expert, but I can fake it on camera," O'Donnell admits. "This is a good experience, but from an acting standpoint SCENT OF A WOMAN is much more satisfying. Action films are fun, but you spend the whole day doing little inserts and cuts, which can become monotonous. Doing a 10-minute dialogue scene each take with Al Pacino is like heaven."

Nevertheless, Goldsman considers the newly devised dynamic between Batman and Robin "one of the best things about this movie. I think it's a terrifically interesting relationship, and Robin gets to be a superhero in a way that has only very recently been done in comics."

Does this mean the celluloid Robin could follow the example of his comic book counterpart and launch his own franchise, as Nightwing? "That would be cool as a concept," O'Donnell admits. "Obviously, there's a lot more to it, and Robin needs his own gadgets and mode of transportation."

In the meantime, O'Donnell is content to continue as a sidekick in the BATMAN films. "I'd definitely do another one," he says. "Someone was asking me where I would like the series to go. I just wish they'd bring Catwoman back; I think Robin and Catwoman could have a serious romance—at least I'd be willing to try!"

Steve Biodrowski

Above: O'Donnell in the new outfit, which abandons the bright colors of the Flying Graysons trapeze act (right). Clearly, this Robin is not the Boy Wonder introduced in *Detective Comics* #38 (below right), although he does serve a similar purpose: brightening the Dark Knight.